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calvert review



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WITH SERVING STILL

"With Serving Still
This have I won;
For my goodwill
To be undone"

Sir Thomas Wyatt

I

Grace abounding from the marble ocean
Of set gold fish shone gleaming and reflected
Off the blue-tin heaven. I expected
Perfect firmament, but my full devotion
Was first required; when I genuflected,
The sand of the beach fell through and the sea was motion
And Byzantium's floor went, and I was not accepted,

And was pulled with the shoreline where the shoreline ended
Past motion stopped to the place where motion started,
To jungles where green and brown earth were upended
Palm over root forever, where the diver-
Birds made cacophony and all demanded
That I dance, that I dance, that I dance, but my mind was
winded.

And I came to find you, empty-echoing
To bring you breath and wait to keep the silence
Until all of the nights of the earth set shining
And the rains fell quiet. But ah calliope,
Your bells and your mouth and your godhead! they came
crying
Awarding grace, instructing smiling winners
What pieces to take from the soul of the worst of sinners.
Victorious, is there no taker with shriving power
For a soul spilled empty with no more soul to give?

II

There is giver and taker; the former is the one
Who kneels eternally at the empty altar
Left recently by the bored and blase martyr
In an age where a crucifixion is the greatest taking:
Self-sacrifice for gain. The lesson is assimilated—
The mourners give and the dead man reaches out
For more and more keening. What a queer position,
Sphinx of the Second Coming, the thing has taken!
Well, we know well. But comprehension catches
At the back of the throat, at the soul of the farthest back
In the crowd—there, the one in the corduroy suit who feels
In his soul for change to throw and hasn't any.
He knows what a bind it is to be found wanting
When everyone else is the only one allowed to want.

— L. S. Gordon

CHINA'S A LONG WAY OFF

— Jim Leslie

Its eyes were like soup spoons. I was surprised at that. They looked (they didn't look really but only pretended to look) out of different sides of its face, of the head of the thing that lay on the beach. I pulled it out. It's still laying outside on the beach, I guess. The wind is blowing, making waves smash on the sand. I can see the moon from where I'm standing at the window. It's huge and pale and smug but a friendly light and I wish it was closer where I could not feel dumb to talk to it. There are no lights on in this lonely cottage of my father's. I'm standing at the window looking out but all I can see is that big moon and heavy clouds dark against the darkness, and hard shadows which are naked autumn trees twitching in front of the storm that's coming. The wind rushes by the house, rubbing against it and scraping its claws along it which are bits of dirt and twigs. The waves come up toward the house from the beach and drag its fingers through the sand on the way back out. This house is very little and lonely against this night.

I wish my brother was here. We'd go out and drag that thing off the beach and bury it or something. He'd know what we ought to do. My brother is very smart. Sort of a poet only he doesn't like the people who read poetry. He says they're smug and supercilious and think they know everything. He likes the people who, he says, live poetry which is why he writes poetry. That is, so he can write about these people. People he meets in bars who are carpenters. Guys that drive concrete mixers and curse like Italians.

My brother's strange; you won't like him unless you get to know him. I'm not ashamed to say it. I love him. He calls me Little Brother Backward. You'd think it was mean unless you knew us and the way we are. He got all the brains but he says he likes me better than all the people he knows who have brains cause they're unhappy a lot and all. But he doesn't know anything about cars. I fix his car for him. I supererogate about cars which means I do more than I have to. Fred says that's the best thing a man can do—fix a car the way I can, hear it humming and know what's wrong and fix it. He says I have a gift. But he's the one who has the brains. He goes to graduate school. (I'm going to get my sister to read this and fix it up.

My sister's smart like Fred, only she doesn't write poetry. She paints and teaches school. I fix her car too. Fred reads me his poetry and if I like the way it sounds then he says it's good poetry. I hear the voice and the way it runs up and down to my ear. I've written some poetry too:

The leaves are fiery-colored
before they die
Like what's bouncing over logs
when snow's outside
falling by
So bright on the trees
like parts of wings
of a butterfly
Why are they so pretty and all
before they fall

It isn't any good but I thought I ought to show it to you. Fred helped me with the spelling but the words are mine. Fred says I'm a sounding-board for him that hums whether it's good or bad after he's already got everything else. I'm his final decider.)

But Fred's got all the brains. He's always reading and going to the library and writing. Some of the things besides poetry have been printed in magazines. Some of the things he writes for his teachers about other guys like him who write stuff.

Me and Fred and Sisie (That's our sister. She's older than me but younger than Fred), are happy when we're together. Sissie was here yesterday and she painted while Fred sat at this table that's behind me now and wrote and I walked around, fooling around on the beach. I found an arrowhead and the shell of a horseshoe crab. A big brown empty shell with the legs still under it all dried out. It's under the porch. I'm going to save it. I watched Sissie painting the oak trees which look very brittle and sad for a while but I didn't watch Fred cause it's no fun to watch somebody write. He waved from the window and then came outside wiping his hands on a towel (his hands sweat very much when he's writing). The screen door banged behind him. He came down and we watched the painting and he talked to Sissie about it. I said it was good but the trees looked sad when they were dead without their leaves. I said why should she want to paint them when they were dead. She said yes they were sad but they were beautiful and good too when they didn't have their leaves. "Tragic and beautiful," she said. I said they looked better when they were alive with all the leaves and she should paint them then. Sissie shows her paintings to me like Fred reads his poems although sometimes she says I hum right even when I don't like it. Like then when I didn't like her to paint those trees. Fred stuck his hands in the air and reached his fingers and said he was a tree without any leaves. Sissie laughed and that's when I told the

poem and Fred wrote it down with a paint brush on one of the flagstones. He said it would be there for the leaves next spring. Sissie said I was the best of the bunch. I said I was the strongest. I picked up a big log and carried it around and threw it in the water. I guess I was showing off a little.

The wind is breaking little branches off the trees. Some of them are hitting the window. I think it's going to rain soon. The waves are grumbling and rumbling at the beach. Smash. Smash. It's very lonely in this dark empty house which we only come down to for short weekend vacations. The moon's almost gone behind the clouds and it's getting darker and darker outside. I wish Fred and Sissie were here. We could play cards. We know a good three-handed solitaire to play. There'd be a light over the table and the click of the cards and the smell of Fred's pipe and the little smell of Sissie's perfume. She's pretty. It looks like she's going to marry that guy me and Fred don't like, Fred says. Although we don't say it to Sissie. That smart guy with the hat with the feather in it. That was the first I didn't like him. That feather. I wouldn't fix his car, even though I knew what was wrong. I said, "Hmm. Hmm. I don't know sir. I don't know. Something's wrong." He said, "Don't worry about it, kid. I'll get the garage man to fix it." Then he said, under his breath but we all heard it, "Dumb bastard." Right in front of Sissie. "Dumb bastard." Sixteen years old is not a kid. Fred laughed when he was gone. He just laughed and I laughed too.

I wish they were here now. It's lonely here but it wouldn't do any good to turn on the light. It would just get lonelier because there wouldn't be the pipe smoke or the click of the cards or Sissie's friendly chatter chatter chatter. And I would be able to see that there is only a salt shaker and one of Fred's old pipes on the table so I would feel worse and more alone. If they were here, Fred would be biting on the pipe hard and smiling around it which is a funny way to smile if you've ever seen it. I'd be drinking a soft drink and he'd be drinking coffee and Sissie'd be drinking iced tea. I'm sometimes a little bit afraid of storms although I don't tell them which is why why I like for them to be here. The wind would have to stay outside then and it wouldn't be so loud if we were talking.

The thing had cats' hair matted and floppy, hanging down in front when I pulled it out of the water. I just left it on the beach because the darkness had come. It's there now unless the tide came in and pulled it away. I'm afraid of it, especially since it's so dark I can't see anything but shadows crawling on shadows. Maybe it's crawling up through the tall grass even though it is dead and will jump in front of the window. I'm afraid to look but I can't stop looking to be sure it doesn't. If I turned away I would be sure it was there staring in and that would be worse. I don't know what to do about it.

Then after we watched Sissie painting, Fred and I walked along the beach and it was then he told me she would probably marry the guy and

we would be nice to him because that was the best way to be. There was a beer bottle on the beach and I threw it out in the water and threw stones at it until it broke and sank. Then I tried to find some more arrowheads but I never can find them when Fred's with me even though he'd like to be with me when I find one.

Then we sat on the beach and I scraped the bark off a stick and got some of the bark under my fingernails and broke the stick into little pieces and broke the pieces while Fred talked to me. He said he was glad for me that I was so happy. And that I didn't see the things that like made him throw the beer cans through the window that time or the time he was so drunk he broke all the mirrors in the house and I had to call Sissie (I ought to tell you our parents are dead) and she had to come over and put him to bed and I'm ashamed for him to say it but he was crying and crying and when Sissie came out you could still hear him crying only real quietly and I was crying too. Then Sissie had me to put to bed (I don't mind telling you I was crying cause that's all right).

I said, "Maybe I don't see things because I'm so dumb." And he said, "Yes, maybe." And he said he was glad I wasn't sad much and only over little things. And I said, "I'm sad for the leaves." And he said, "Yes. Sad for the leaves which is good." And he said he was fool which is a lie and I shouldn't think about the stupid things he does. And I said, "Like the mirrors." And he said, "Yes."

Then we walked back down the beach and watched Sissie some more. And later on she left when that guy with the feather came to pick her up which was when he asked me about the knock in his engine which wasn't a knock but a thump.

Fred didn't do any work today but just sat on the beach in front of the house and looked at the water and drank beer which wasn't even cold. Every once in a while he'd get up and drive to town and get some more. But he didn't get mad or unhappy. He just sat there. He took his shirt off and got windburned red as a lobster. But it didn't seem to hurt him or he didn't seem to mind.

I walked around looking for stuff and sometimes I threw little stones at him but he didn't do anything. He just smiled funny and called out, "Hi.." Or, "Ho". When the sun was going down and the sky was all fiery-pretty (there were some clouds which the sunlight turned all different beautiful colors—I've often wondered why that is—maybe it's cause the sun is bending around the world and through each drop of rain that's floating around up there like I saw at school once in science class), I went in the house and got his pipe and sat down beside him hoping he'd smoke it and we'd talk some but he just held it in his mouth, not lighting it.

Finally he got up and took off the rest of his clothes—his underwear and all. He looked funny because he's got a little pot tummie sticking out in front and a little pot sticking out behind which is his rump. You don't

notice it with his clothes on how funny he looks. I was laughing and he was laughing patting his tummie, saying it was cause he sat down so much and never exercised and maybe cause he drank a little too much.

Then he said he was going to swim around the world a couple of times for exercise and meet me maybe in China sometime. If I wanted anything while he was gone I should call Sissie. Then he walked into the water with the pipe still in his mouth and he was laughing and smiling and waving with the pipe stuck out at an angle like he should have been wearing a yachting cap. I said for him to be careful where he swam because he didn't know how to swim good and wouldn't it be better if he just walked to China. And he laughed and said, "Oh, that's right." And so he'd just go in and swim along the bottom to China so he wouldn't get lost. Then his head went under still with that pipe. The sun was going down and my eyes hurt. I walked around looking for things 'til it was almost dark and I was coming back when that thing was in the water, slapping against the shore and I went in and dragged it out. It scared me it looked so awful with its eyes pretending to look. And now I'm at the window with Fred's pipe on the table behind me while the wind slashes outside and the first raindrops are beginning to pat against the window. That's why I worry about him out there swimming with this big storm coming up.

SESTINA: Royal Enfield

I.

My heart to sixty pounds inflates at its roar,
 And at the tap of its spun-dizzy chain,
 As through wet windscreen tavern lights blur red,
 Flying ever back down the rushing road.
 I flash defiance to the head-wind,
 And machine-rip a path to the city.

II.

I think of Autumn days away from cities —
 No breath stirring through tall trees' lanes of red . . .
 Save the Royal Enfield's raucous storm wind.
 I come to a bridle-path's blocking chain:
 It is low: twist the throttle, engine roars,
 And without muffler I trumpet down the road.

III.

Over torrid Summer's grit-slinging roads
I catapult with fixed grin, eyes shot red
With blood from the smogs of gas-maddened cities.
I bowl past the punk's knives and threat'ning chains
On streets alive with desperate, humid roar,
Carried to my ears on a tepid wind.

IV.

Bit to the groin by sword-cold winds,
I skid like a puck through winter-slick cities.
From a raided bash toward the sunset's red
I grind and slide, pursued by a vengeful roar
Of narcotics agents trying to block the roads
And add to my foot a ball and chain.

V.

So up and down the Eastern Seaboard chain,
With bags of liberated watches roars
The Royal Enfield, following every road,
And spinning up gravel in any city,
Just so long as my name's written on the wind,
So far as I get before the lights turn red.

VI.

But soon, what puddle will briefly turn red,
With my blood, what littered shoulder my chain
Will flying broken smash, and then what road
Will wear my statistic death, what city's
Dump will hide that wreck, that wind
With whose racket while living I drowned death's roar?

ENVOI

And now my ears roar, my eyes cloud with red
As my chain again rattles, as my tires bite the road,
And I fly like the wind through a faceless city.

— B. Jeffrey Price

IN INGLORIOUS PROCESSION

—Richard A. Houck

I am driving down a darkened road between towering austere trees. Teardrops streaming down my windshield. The sky has purged it soul. And all the pressure is gone. Alone behind my iron door with a peephole in the present time. Won't somebody knock and say may I come in? And smile and shake my hand? Where we can sit in overstuffed brown chairs in a warm brown room amid old worn books and the smell of black coffee. Discussions of a general nature concerning self. Oh yes. A few try. Please. May I look into you? A fast peek, yes. But they take too long. Slam the door. Try another room, but please come back again some time, won't you? Eleven don't hear or don't care and try doors without iron locks. Doors with welcome signs and fluorescent smiles. Oh yes! **Do** come in! Take anything you want but take it gently! Well I won't sell for a penny. I fear the key will be lost for a long time.

Would you mind standing in line?

Across the town walks in tall grass weaving on a Sunday morning. Crisp air on a steep high hill. Watching the town and listening to the bells. Fresh smells. Smiling people holding hands. Exchanging thoughts. Everything I am and have is free because I love you. A kiss and a sparkling smile. Like thunder followed by a tardy bubbling sun.

Here I am. Sorry I was late. A vintage concept not available to the very rich of money. Or the very greedy of soul. No! Keep out! How dare you pry? What do you want? You must pay because fair is fair. Tail between the legs. Beating a fast retreat. In the distance now. A faint sound emanating from within . . . sorry you couldn't stay.

Like the ocean waves. Period of receptivity, rising mound, peak, break declining mound, period of receptivity, recession. Be sweet and kind and hold my hand. here is no real meanness here. I wouldn't hurt a flower. Would you like a pink and blue one? They are gone.

An expansion of consciousness within a cell. Pushing out the walls. But they are too strong. Pressure sometimes so strong that the building sweats in its rotundity. Dripping blood and heavy breathing. Pause for the noon hour. All the world is barefoot. But I have shoes on. Heavy shoes with buckles and snaps. How much I paid for them and nobody noticed. Fools in the valley! Look up on the mountain in the window of my cell. Behold my boots and let's hear a few gasps. Pity please because they are so heavy I cannot move from this spot. I step out and thoughts protracted on a hill declining.

The blur at the end of the extension of rationality. When the only way to get in is to shove forward and spin fast. As the mind stretches to the point where it lapses into faith. For those few who are able. Being beyond the point of enforced definition. Beyond the point of conceptuality. But conceptuality is only the beginning. For most it is a joyless end. Occasionally to lay my finger upon it. Like Columbus into a cup of darkness. Feeling oneself approaching the snap. A momentary return to the womb. Sliding up, tripping, pushing. Hard.

Moving through the gears. Have passed all those in first. Lobored through second and now almost into third. A very elite club. Maybe someday to wind into fourth. Among those who are. Like falling into a hole? Or like a white bird down the runway as he opens up wide and is away? No more grubbing. No more weeds and nickels. Can feel the tug. Come on, it says. Keep spring tight; very wound with loose exterior. The kind that make it. A looking out. Always. The most important. Requisite. Reflect it in with a paperclip and a note of unopinionated dissection. Keep it out of the protoplasm and floating on glass. For immediate dissemination. With an eye on future reference. Don't bungle or meddle like the other 99. Meddling being the Capital Sin. Very hard to keep the me out. You get what you want. Necessarily. The blur comes after the struggle. There is a rectangular box in between. In which I wish to be.

But now . . . A wet morning.

Huddled with the group on a porch wrapped in mesh. Squatting in the corner viewing my domain. My ears are up and intent visage. Regarding the product and not the producers. A sly coup d'oeil. Vague notions on my left. Broad concepts on my right. Stung by the whispers. The death of self. The death of God. The death of the city. I in the midst of all the carnage. Drowning in a vat of Pepsi. Wriggling my ears and in dialogue with self. Earnest debates between qualified members of the Human Comedy. Serious announcements of doom. Delivered with gesture indicating no relativity of issue. But where is their sorrow? The accompanying emotional manifestations? The ideas are sad and heavy but are gaily tossed about like candy. I say, fellows, are you all there? Slick chatter and expensive labels. I sit politely. Feeling I am a funnel for the world's madness. An osmotic sponge. Absorbing nonsensical whispers and snickers. As many as twenty absolutes a day.

All contradictory. Be a regular guy. Consent to meta-camp. Still. I'm sinking down. Pulling a hat over my ears. Which is not very . . . cool. Definitely. The concert continues overhead. A battle of echoes. An unfortunate member of the carbonated generation. Listening daily to the **only** answers. And I can't even understand the questions. Mais tout le monde le comprend. Most clearly. Sure would like to inject my little yes or no. Each layer of chronology brings less answers. Rapidly approaching the middle zero on the axis. A paralytic tongue among a thousand

golden answers. Tasting a bit of envy and shame. As I grow worse. Watching those circling me. Hearing that it all makes sense. Oh, yes. Like grandmother's cupboard. You don't say! Pass the opener, please.

Out. In and out.

Eating a grapefruit on a super highway. Can have its problems. Stopping for a napkin. A lonely little cubicle of aluminum sides and glass face and folksy name. A kithless kookie shop. In vain trying to look cheerful. Affectation being the necessity. Undoubtedly suffering under an electrical burden this wet day. Buried in the fog. At the beginning of another day. Buzzing to a halt. Door goes whoosh as I acidly enter. My classic coup d'oeil at the donut dispensers. Of low voltage rapidly engaging in a communications gap. Smiling banter of pseudo-events. The Mass Man who cut everybody down to size would be peaceful here.

Five suffering souls. Exemplifying the outside. But more magnified due to geographic pettiteness. Causing a not so illusory expansion. Coffee or tea? Ha. Ha. Danish? Ha. Ha. Upon whom is the joke? Normal life consisting of inconsequential. Exercise in modes of insanity. A perversion of private interplay. Punishment by means of indifference. Or exclusion. The mechanical distribution of a numbing pain. The existential on a super highway, USA. Like the lost paper having slipped behind the desk. Here I am. Here I am. Find me. I say, a little effort on your part, if you please. Just another sheet lost. For loss implies the desire to find. There is the lack. It doesn't consciously exist. The stream goes in, fuels, and files out. In inglorious procession. Lament the declining polarity. The five don't know it.

But they are dead.

Longing for a linger. Of maybe 50 years. But granted thousands of quarter-hours. And they stay. Forever. As I also sip and run. Guilty also. Porting my clean white with me. From the Little World of Lack. To the big of Cymbals and Popcorn and customary diffusion. My future dangers of a lesser evil. Watching the blank longing stares as I silently slip out.

No matter. For daily there are midget stars dotting vast empty spaces. A little something for your nothing, God might say. No storybook twinkle here. Listless pinpoints in expectation. No chance of an aquatic descent. Somebody even turned off my fountain.

Setting a mood now. Days of conflict evaporating into the twilight. Hate you again tomorrow, you can bet. Can't see the enemy. Little bit of love peeking out. Hello! and a wink. Darkness now and hypnotic crickets. Passions seeping. Under the door and around the trees. All is opaque and translucent. Curling. Dripping . . .

Observe mass migration from silken bonds. Multi-colored butterflies searching for a net. Courting stimulants under bright lights on notable streets. Penny chatter a sound prelude. Mechanical engineers floating by in prancing bad babies. Lines cast everywhere. The phoney powers is

the honey. A loud gorilla roar. In neutral, of course. Swoons into the netting. A tippie and a topple. Big time fantasy and small world fulfillment. I say, my dear, would you mind removing your hat? Short circuit and an electric charge.

And a little rust is born.

From aluminum nuts and a very short screw. Two bold, cold, and unwilling. Despite plastic truelies. The cancer spreading and pervading. A camera now. Peering down the hill which was never very high. In the distance, a plateau covered with oil. Flat and high and sopping joys.

The sun pops out.

And a rainbow. Garlands for quality. A little cheer. For goodly abstractions. And not—it's what's happening. Sorry, no plastic bang. A little victory for shining steel. In the end it always lasts longer.

And now the end is nearing and I with anxiety am swelling.

Sadness, yes, because the freedom is gone. A dissipation. The conclusion to nothing. But never a waste. A return to rigor. Lack of block imbibition but no idleness of being. The center still rotates. Derm-covered pulsating lights. Walking backwards into Autumn watching the Summer end narrow to a pinpoint. The road is smooth. Raising of arms and loud laughter as herds of leaves thunder groundward. Like massive tanned and burned snowflakes. Brightly-colored sunflakes! Concept streatching of singular endeavor. Put into place. The system fattened and streamlined. Easy to see the pinpoint, but by end is huge. Won't stumble for many miles. Soon will feel the pain. Later a stab of anguish. Trickle of a blooddrop off the forehead and hanging free on a lip. But that is far away. Fast dash before the onslaught. No real need of puff and pant. The cycle is fast but I am faster! Keep my pace and won't fear blood. Confusion and disgust is to me. Graying of soul upon realization of speed cycle. Perhaps an affirmative waste. Garbage, after all, is everywhere. Sucker for dissipation. A cliché hooked onto a creature of habit. Consistency of rigor in the growing spheres. But now there are no trees. A narrow yields naught. Question of policy and metaphysics.

To the singular soul.

The master would tell me DO, but I would ask him Why. Idealism in a function sieve. A band of children on the wax paper. My idealism—here, catch it. Run fast. An admonition: Keep away from circles, triangles, and all that is blatantly linear. Regard! There is vacuum everywhere! Shun anti-love and anti-thought! But now it is too late.

Am I in? I am. No appendages hanging out? No. Swift movement of tongue and hard exhale. But the windows are all rolled up. Encased in black behind a motor purring. Sorrow nodding towards all that is green and rolling. Resignation. As we pull out and away. And I am not yet one and twenty. We go aimlessly until we run out of gas. And my chauffeur lets me out.

(Untitled)

My father emptied garbage with a smile
left his bed
who shuffled past the morning grinning shoes
his make-believe in breakfast juice
 (scrambled eggs the
dreams of waved grey hair) coffee
sounding a final drip before he would
start the steps
his downing a stumbled drum i hear in sleep
my father
spun out laughter from the dinner table smoke
empty plates, cups of
dried tea and ashes
the jokes that had their timing in his teeth
before the cigar's drop
 (cigars with a gesture
of his purpose)
now we sit among the hangings of our speech
across the unburned begging of
his laugh
my father has left the table
with a smile around his death

— Chris Gardner

BEWARE THE IDES OF MARCH

A. Michael Knapp

I

"'BUTLER TO TAKE STAND IN HOLLYWOOD COMMIE PROBE,' God, what a headline!" he said as they entered the restaurant.

"Yeah, what do you make of it?"

"Well I'd be willing to bet that Larry Butler never was a Communist, isn't now, and never will be," the secretary replied.

"Sure," said one of the others, "you **would** say that. I don't think there's a woman in the United States who isn't in love with Lawrence T. Butler. But that doesn't prove he's not a communist."

The hostess came up to the group and waited until they had stopped talking. "Five? This way please."

As soon as they were seated the conversation took up where it had left off. The secretary seemed to feel obliged to defend herself.

"It doesn't prove that he is, either."

"Isn't that just like a woman, Bill?"

"Yeah, their logic is faultless. She's right though. I don't think Butler could be a Communist, and that committee's gonna have to do some tall proving for me to believe it."

"Are you ready to order now?" the waitress asked.

They ordered, as usual having a round of drinks before lunch. They worked together in one of the numerous government agencies, but their office was rather low on the bureaucratic scale, and their work was rarely interesting enough to discuss. The House Un-American Activities Committee hearings had stirred up more concern than had anything else in the last few months. Even the Southeast Asian business was beginning to be pushed out of the headlines by the investigation. Perhaps it was because it was mid-March—early spring—and people wanted a change of news along with the change of weather, or perhaps it was because they were sick of being forced to think about war again, quite against their wishes, or perhaps it was that Hollywood was closer to home. And maybe it was the mere fact that it **was** Hollywood. A recent public opinion poll had indicated that more people could identify Lawrence T. Butler than Mao Tse-Tung, and the hearings gave them a chance to be more personally involved in the news.

"Just look at the roles he's played—no Communist could have played them the way he has."

I'm not so sure of that, Frank. I haven't read much about these hearings, but I've heard that this whole thing started when **The Academician** came out. And being a Communist would have helped him in that role, if anything."

"Wasn't that the one where he was a student or something?"

"No, no. He was a university professor. Somewhere in the movie some guy wrote a letter to the president of the university telling him to fire Butler because he was a Communist."

"Was he?"

"No, it was just some crackpot."

"But what you all don't realize is that Butler's roles have nothing to do with his own political beliefs. That's why an actor is good—because he can **be** someone else so well that everybody's convinced that that's who he is. I'm not saying that Butler is a Communist, just that it's possible."

"Oh, come on. Do you really think Larry Butler is a Communist?"

"No, of course not."

"Well neither do I and what's more, I don't think anyone seriously does."

"I'll go along with that," chimed in the secretary. "I'm just interested in what the committee's going to ask him."

"I suppose we all are!" came the laughing reply.

Bill raised his glass. "Here's to Lawrence T. Butler, idol of 150 million Americans: May he fare well!"

"I'll drink to that."

"Hear, hear."

"Skool."

"Me too."

II

Lawrence T. Butler was asleep in his hotel suite. He was expecting his friend, Dolf Reynolds, but Dolf wasn't sure when he could make it, and Butler knew that if he wasn't awake, Dolf would get him up. Dolf was a nationally syndicated columnist who wrote "Dolf's Place," mostly personal interest stuff centering on Hollywood, and he had been here since the hearings began. As soon as he arrived, Butler called him and asked him to come up to the hotel. Dolf was more than willing to help his friend, and promised to come as soon as the hearings were finished for the day.

At noon, Reynolds had the maid let him in.

"Hey Larry, you up?" he yelled as he shut the door. There was no reply, so he walked through the living room into the bedroom.

"Hey Butler, you lazy sonofabitch, get outa the sack, will ya!"

Butler opened one eye and mumbled, "Hi, Dolf. Go fix yourself a drink. I'll be out in a minute."

Reynolds went back into the living room, sat down, and thought of the trouble his friend found himself in. It was really a ridiculous thing, the HUAC, but it had power, and that's what counted. He had seen them destroy more than one man before, not by proving anything at all, but merely by calling him to testify, making insinuations, and letting the press and the public do the rest. And now Larry. What the hell could Larry possibly have to do with Communists? It had never come up before, but they were best friends. If Larry were a Communist, Dolf would know, wouldn't he?

"How's it going, Dolf?" Larry asked as he walked into the room.

Dolf could see what made Butler an idol to women. He was tall, with fairly dark skin, light hair, muscular, and had a perpetual wrinkle at the corners of his eyes, as if a smile were always trying to get through. His voice was mellow—not deep exactly, but very smooth. But Larry had depths that none of them could possibly know about. Dolf remembered sitting up until 6 A.M. with him one time when he had been jilted; he remembered nights when they would do nothing but read poetry with a group of friends. It was strange that they had never discussed politics.

"Dolf?"

"Oh, sorry, Lar. It's not going too well, really. A lot of them are getting stepped on, and in something like this, there's no way to avoid it."

"You've been there since they started, haven't you?"

"Yup. From the first day."

"Well look, I'm a little hazy on exactly what's going on, so why don't you start at the beginning and fill me in. I haven't paid any attention to it until I got that subpoena two days ago."

"Ok. First of all, you've got to realize that this isn't the same kind of committee that McCarthy headed up for the Senate in the '50's. They're just as insistent, but they get much less publicity now. The only reason this particular hearing is so damned dangerous is because it is getting publicity. And that's happening only because anything that has to do with Hollywood gets in the news."

"And you're not helping any with your column, huh?"

Dolf recognized the start of one of their 'one-upsmanship contests' but he had more to say, so he decided to cut it short. "Screw you, buddy, I gotta make a living too, you know."

"Ok, man, ok, so just go on with your story." Butler winked at Dolf and Reynolds smiled back, then became serious again.

"The whole thing began when the committee got a tip-off that Marsden, your producer in **The Academician**, had contributed half his gross intake to the Communist Party. So far Marsden hasn't even testified. Instead, they're having all his friends, actors who have worked with him, secretaries, the whole bit, testify for them, trying to get as much as they can on him before they call Marsden himself. Not only that, but now some of the committee members have got it into their heads that they have a higher duty now:

"To expose all the corruption, foreign elements, and subversive elements in one of the largest and best known industries, to use their phrase." Butler was shaking his head slowly.

"It's hard as hell to combat this kind of crusade, and a lot of innocent people are getting trampled, not because they're Communists, but just because they've been called to testify. People have strange reactions to this kind of thing. When there's a chance of any Communist infiltration, they're willing to believe the worst about their own mothers."

"So it looks bad, huh?"

"Yeah, I'm afraid so, old buddy."

"Well, what can I do?"

Dolf laughed. "Christ, Larry, I don't know. You could try praying a lot. Why don't you just answer their questions and get it over with?"

"Aw come on, Dolf, let's not kid around about this thing."

"I really don't know what to tell you, Lar. What's the problem?"

"You seem to be determined to be as pig-headed as possible. You know as well as I do that as soon as I sit down in that committee room my career may be finished. As soon as I open my mouth, everyone in the country is going to know exactly what I'm saying. And like you yourself when people think there's a chance of Communist infiltration, they'll believe the worst and ask questions later."

"I know, I know. I'm sorry if I sounded like I was minimizing the danger. But when you look at it realistically, there's not much choice in the end. You can do one of three things: you can fail to appear, and they'll cite you for contempt of Congress and make you appear; you can go and answer all the questions and accept the consequences; or you can go and refuse to answer the questions and risk the contempt charge anyway. Those are your only alternatives."

"Well what do you think I should do?"

"Look, Lar, no matter how much I like you personally, I wouldn't dare tell you to do anything. It's for you to decide how you want to handle it; which way you think is best."

Butler said nothing. Instead, he stared at the blank tv screen across the room and reviewed what his friend had said. Tomorrow at this time, March 15, he'd be in the hearing, having questions flung at him by crusading congressmen who thought—probably in good faith—that they were protecting their beloved nation from the scourge of the Red Menace.

Dolf watched him, noticing the twitch of his jaw muscle as he concentrated. When Butler spoke he sounded tired.

"You make it sound very simple, Dolf, and in a way maybe it is. But the way I see it, with the things I've got to juggle around, it's pretty damned complex. It's not just a question of my own career. So far as that's concerned, I'm willing to divulge everything I've ever done in politics. It's a free country, and I'm allowed to think whatever I want, and that damn

committee knows it. But hell, everything I say, or don't say, will affect not only myself, but everyone whose names I mention, everyone I'm asked questions about. I just don't think I have the right to endanger the reputations, if not the lives, of those people."

"You've got to take that into consideration, Larry, but that's only part of it, really."

"I know that, but from my point of view that's the largest part."

"Why? Don't be an ass, will you? I don't see where you get this vision of yourself as some kind of virtuous warrior, loyal to your mysterious friends and out to protect them against any and all dangers, possibly at the risk of your own career. It just doesn't make sense."

"It's **not** just loyalty, Dolf, it's more than that. It's also a deep conviction—and I mean this even if it may sound a bit bourgeois,—that I'm entitled to whatever political views I want, regardless of how much any damn committee may dislike them, so long as I don't hurt anyone else. After all, what does the U.S. government preach, above all? Diversity of thought, right? And as soon as some idiot congressman thinks he wants to clear out all the "creeping socialism" and Red infiltration, it all goes down the drain. I don't like it, buddy, and I refuse to be bullied into anything."

"Besides, Dolf, these guys are my friends. We've helped each other through rough times before, and now is no time to turn tail on them just because they happen to think that capitalists are doomed. It would be senseless and dishonest and I'm not about to do it to them. Besides, they may be right."

"Larry, I think you're overemphasizing the whole thing, blowing it all out of proportion, exaggerating your own importance in the whole thing."

"No, Dolf, I don't think I'm exaggerating at all. What about Rene' and Max and Joseph? Rene is without a doubt a communist. Max and Joseph are—well, let's just say they're socialists. These guys are my friends. Not like you, of course, but friends just the same. I've discussed politics with them, and they've got their ideas about Karl Marx and I've got mine. I couldn't give less of a damn what they think one way or the other. What I do give a damn about is that they're good men, they're honest, they're concerned, and they care about me. We understand each other, Dolf, and..."

"Ok, Larry, I think I get the idea. So what?"

"So I've been seen with them, and so has Marsden. The committee's sure to ask me about them. And then what? Do I say, 'I have at least 3 friends who are Communists. Go subpoena them, grill them, tear them apart on the stand, ruin their careers, their lives.' Do I have the right, Dolf? I don't think so. Not for a minute."

"But Larry, you. . . ."

"Wait till I'm finished. Even if I didn't mention their names, even if all I did was admit that 3 of my friends are Communists, then what? They'd

crucify me. They'd take me apart piece by piece. 'Guilt by association' and all that bullshit. So you see, Mr. Reynolds, I'm hooked. I'm on the rack. I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't. Either way, no matter how I handle it, someone will get hurt. My only chance is to try to damage no one but myself."

Dolf could see that Butler was really upset. He couldn't remember his ever being so visibly distraught over anything. More and more he realized what a mental strain his friend must be undergoing. But what could Reynolds do? He wanted to help, but there was nothing he could do.

"I've got to testify, don't I? Not appearing would kill me in itself. But do I answer or don't I?"

"Jesus, Larry, don't make me answer that. I told you before that you can't expect me to tell you what to do. I can only advise you, but the final decision must be yours."

"All right, dammit, advise."

"Answer everything they ask you completely, truthfully, humbly, don't say anything you don't have to, and hope for the best."

"All right, Dolf, thank you. I'll have to think about it for a while, but I'll consider what you've said."

"Do that, Larry, and I wish you all the luck in the world."

"Thanks, buddy, I appreciate your help."

"Right. Take it easy ol' buddy."

"Thanks for coming over, Dolf."

As Dolf Reynolds left, he wondered just how well he knew his friend. Politics was something they just had never discussed; there had been little room for it, really in their relationship. And it hadn't mattered to them. Until now, anyway. It really wasn't a nice thought at all that Larry might be a Communist, whose job might be to send information back to the Soviet Union. Perhaps he **was** a Communist. But it hadn't made any difference to them up to now. Why should it suddenly make a difference? Come on, boy, Dolf said to himself. Pull yourself out of it. You know Larry's no different than you are. After all we've been through, it's a bit ridiculous to start being suspicious now. Larry's no Communist and you know it. Reynolds entered the elevator and left the building quickly.

Butler closed the door firmly, then locked it and slowly went in to make himself a drink. When he had fixed it, he went back to his chair and stared at the floor in front of him where the shadows cast by his legs met, and sat for half an hour, barely moving except to raise his drink to his lips occasionally, half-heartedly sipping at the bourbon. Finally he got up, leaving his glass on the table, and went back to bed.

III

"This committee of the House of Representatives of the United States," intoned the chairman, "has convened to investigate charges made by per-

sons who shall remain unidentified that certain prominent members of the movie industry not only are Communists, but have contributed substantial sums to the Communist Party of the U.S., and therefore may be in violation of the law requiring all agents of foreign powers to be registered with the federal government, and may also be in violation of the Smith Act, which makes it a crime to conspire in advocating the forcible overthrow of the U.S. Government."

Butler sat erect, quiet, his head unmoving, while the committee chairman read the statement of purpose. It was an open hearing, but most of the few people who had managed to get into the room were reporters. Dolf, he had noticed, was there. But Butler knew better than to look at him. When Dolf Reynolds was working he was a totally different man and he took his work seriously. Butler knew he would get no sign of encouragement or even of recognition from him, so he merely listened to the preliminaries. Besides, he had decided that it would make a better impression on everyone if he appeared interested.

"Today we have asked Mr. Lawrence T. Butler to appear before the committee and to assist us by giving information from his own experience. I would now like to direct my statements to the witness. Mr. Butler, this is not a trial, and you will not be required to defend yourself in any manner. No charges have been brought against you, nor accusations made against you. We will ask you questions, which we will expect you to answer to the best of your ability, not to expose you or to damage your reputation, but to assist us in determining what, if any, new legislation is required, and what it should include."

Butler noted the bored, singsong rhythm the chairman read in, realizing that he had probably read the same statement of purpose and responsibility to every witness who had appeared—and from what Dolf had told him, there had been many. He began to perspire now as he was sworn in.

"We will now begin the questioning. Do you have any statement to make before we begin, Mr. Butler?"

"No." It came out shaky and almost inaudible so that he had to clear his throat and say it again. "No, I don't."

"Very well. Mr. Anderson will begin the questioning."

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, Mr. Butler, would you give us your full name and address for the record please?"

"Lawrence T. Butler, 416 Oakview Drive, Beverly Hills, California."

There followed some rather inconsequential sparring about his birthplace, his parents, previous places he had lived, but Butler went along with the gag and answered all the questions as politely as possible. He wished they'd cut the crap and get it over with.

"Now, Mr. Butler, can you tell us whether you know Mr. Leslie Peacock, and in what capacity?"

"Yes, I know him. He directed a film in which I starred."

"And what was the name of that film?"

"The **Academician**."

"Fine. Now how about Mr. William Marsden?"

"I know him also. He produced the picture."

"The same one, **The Academician**?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Fine. Now do you know either of these men in any other than their official capacities in the movie industry?"

"Only slightly. Socially."

Seated in the spectators' section, Dolf Reynolds smiled. So far so good. The committee wasn't pushing him, and he was answering the questions. But then his smile faded. He'd seen this easy warm-up before. Pretty soon they'd increase the pressure a little more, and then they'd get downright dirty.

"Then you have no other connection with these men?"

"That's right."

"Not politically?"

"No."

"All right. Mr. Haines, would you like to continue the questioning?"

"Yes, thank you, Mr. Anderson."

"Mr. Butler, have you ever been, or are you now a member of the Communist Party of the United States?"

My God, Butler thought, they certainly aren't pulling any punches now! Should he answer? Butler thought of his conversation yesterday with Dolf. He had argued against mentioning names because he had ideals, because they were his friends. And they were sure to come up next. But did he really believe that stuff? Was he really willing to sacrifice his own career, reputation, and even life for the sake of his friends, his ideals? Wouldn't it be easier just to answer everything? Think, dammit, think! What could they do to him even if he did answer? They had said it wasn't a trial. What difference would it make if others knew his political affiliations his friends?

"Mr. Butler, you seem to be having some trouble. Would you like me to repeat the question?"

"No, that won't be necessary." Involuntarily he stiffened, sat up straighter. "Relying on the protection of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, which releases any citizen from responsibility in giving information which might incriminate himself, I shall not answer that question."

Dolf stared at Butler for a second, shook his head in disbelief, then resumed taking notes.

"Are you intimately acquainted with anyone who is a member of the CPUSA?"

"Relying on the protection of the 5th Amendment, I decline to answer that question."

"Now Mr. Butler, so far you have been very cooperative with this committee, and it would be a shame to spoil our image of you by refusing to answer a few simple questions."

Damn the man, Butler thought. He's trying to work on what he figures is the supreme concern of every actor—his image. Well he's wrong. I don't give a shit what he thinks of me. He probably doesn't go to the movies anyway. Simple questions my ass!

"There's really no reason to start being obstinate now," Haines continued. "Tell me something, Mr. Butler, do you like living in the United States?"

"It's not bad, sometimes."

"And would you like to continue living in the U.S.?"

"I suppose so."

"And you expect the protection of the law and of the Constitution you have just cited, so long as you remain here?"

"I would expect it, yes."

"Well you see, Mr. Butler, that is precisely what we are trying to preserve for you here. Our form of government sanctions and protects diversity of thought, political and otherwise, but it must do so through the law. Our duty as members of Congress is to pass such laws. To accomplish this, we must have information, and that function of gathering information is the reason for congressional investigations. Now we cannot protect your rights by passing laws unless we can get the necessary information; unless you are willing to cooperate. I'll ask you again, and I'd like an answer this time: Are a member of the CPUSA or are you intimately acquainted with anyone who is?"

"Mr. Haines, you speak of protecting my right to diversity of thought. I speak of a more fundamental right when I refuse to incriminate myself."

"Very well, Mr. Butler. Will you then tell me if you have ever contributed money to the CPUSA?"

"Again, I decline to answer, and cite the 5th Amendment."

Haines began to raise his voice now: "Do you know if either Marsden or Peacock has contributed money to the CPUSA?"

"I respectfully decline to answer."

Now Haines was shouting. "Isn't it true that Marsden contributed 50% of his gross intake from **The Academician** to the CPUSA?"

"I decline to answer."

"Did Peacock tell you of his concern over Marsden's actions?"

"I decline to answer."

"Will the gentleman from Idaho, Mr. Haines, yield?"

Haines almost collapsed back into his seat, glared at Butler, and said, "I yield to the distinguished gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Mullis."

"Thank you, Mr. Haines. Mr. Butler, did you attend a cocktail party given by Mr. Marsden on December 17 last?"

"I invoke the 5th Amendment and respectfully decline to answer."

"Come now, Mr. Butler. Right here in this room we have heard testimony that you did attend such a party. There is no question but that you were there. Unless, of course, you wish to accuse those witnesses of perjurying themselves before this committee. Do you make such an accusation?"

"No, I do not."

"Then will you admit to being present?"

"Yes."

"Fine, Mr. Butler. Now we're getting somewhere. Now will you please tell us, to the best of your recollection, who else attended that gathering?"

"No."

"What was that?"

"I decline to answer on grounds that it might tend to incriminate me."

"Mr. Butler! Would you have this committee believe that your choice of friends is so poor as to incriminate you merely by divulging their names?"

There was a slight murmur of amusement in the room.

"The committee can believe what it wishes."

Oh for Christ sakes, Larry, don't lose control now, thought Dolf. Don't give them anything to latch onto. Once you do, you're dead; they'll pick you apart piece by piece. And it isn't going to well now.

"Then you will not tell us who else attended that party."

"No."

"Perhaps you will tell us whether you went to the premier of your own movie, **The Academician**, on 18 December."

The murmur became outright laughter. Butler had no choice but to answer. "Yes, I did." He was calmer now, regaining his control.

"And did you go to the celebration afterwards?"

"I did."

"Who accompanied you to that celebration?"

"I decline to answer that question."

"Another bad choice of friends, Mr. Butler? That's all right, you don't have to answer that one."

The sparring had become a war now, and it was not an easy battle for Butler to fight. The questioning, the bantering, the accusations, the innuendoes and the refusals continued for two hours more. Finally the committee just gave up. After a particularly vociferous exchange which had one of the committee members up out of his seat shaking his fist and shouting at Butler, the chairman pounded his gavel for order, and as soon as the congressman sat down, said,

"This committee stands adjourned until ten o'clock tomorrow morning. Mr. Butler, you will no longer be needed."

As the gavel came down, Dolf Reynolds did not bolt from his seat to

rush for the phones as did the other reporters. He sat staring, half in disbelief, half in admiration for the man who had been his friend for years. He looked at Butler, sitting bolt upright in the witness chair, his head un-moving as he put himself back together. What had really happened? The committee had been grilling him for more than four hours, and what had Dolf learned? Little, if anything. Now he was merely confused. The question again popped into his head: was Larry a Communist? At first glance, his testimony might indicate that he was. But looking at it objectively—as a reporter, not a friend—Dolf had to admit that he still wasn't sure. But dammit. Butler was his friend. He should know better by now for chrissakes.

Lawrence T. Butler allowed himself a sigh of relief before leaving his place and quickly, forcefully striding to the door. He hailed a cab and was back at his hotel in 15 minutes. As he reached the door, he heard his phone ringing, but made no attempt to hurry in unlocking the door. By the time he entered the room the ringing had stopped.

He walked to the table where the last of his bourbon sat, poured it into his glass, and swallowed it in two gulps. "They'll call back" he reassured himself as he went into the bedroom. It was 3:30 now—just enough time to take a nap before dinner. He called room service and told them to bring his room at 6 o'clock, then went to bed, muttering one word over and over: "Bastards."

IV

The sound of laughter filtered through the doors of the elevator even before the floor indicator stopped at "M." Five fast-talking people—four men and a woman—emerged in a group and headed down the street to the restaurant. They always ate together, always at the same restaurant on their lunch hour, and the hostess knew them well by this time.

"This way please," she said, walking ahead of them and indicating the usual table. They sat down.

"Hey, Barb, what happened with your hero, Lawrence Butler? Wasn't he supposed to testify yesterday?"

"Hey, I forgot all about that!"

"I wonder if we can get a paper."

The waitress came to take their orders, which began with the usual round of whiskey sours and martinis, and promised to return with a copy of the morning newspaper. She brought it, and handed it to one of the men. As he unfolded it and read the headlines, his face went slack with astonishment.

"Jesus Christ, will you look at that!"

"Well, what is it, Bill? Don't just gape—read it!"

"The headline says 'BUTLER TAKES 5th,' and then the sub-head is COMMITTEE IMPLIES COMMIE LEANINGS.'"

"Oh my God. What does the article say?"

"Washington, March 15. Testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee today, actor Lawrence T. Butler refused to answer most of the questions put to him in the 4-hour examination. In an unusually heated hearing, which ended as one congressman leaped from his seat and began screaming at the witness. Butler took the 5th on all questions pertaining to his associations with the CPUSA, his friendship with Party members, and his close personal Hollywood friends.' My God, do you realize what this means?"

"Wait a minute, Bill, just read on."

"Well, there's some stuff here about Marsden, his producer, and Peacock, his director, and. . ."

"Just read what it says about Larry," the secretary excitedly pleaded.

"Well let me see. . . Oh yes, here it is: 'At one point in the testimony, after Butler refused to give the names of his friends who had attended certain parties with him, Rep. Damon Mullis (D-Ark.) came back with this comment, "Would you have this committee believe that your choice of friends is so poor as to incriminate you merely by mentioning their names?" Butler's reply: "The committee may believe what it wishes."' I guess that does it."

"Yeah, I guess so," she said, the sorrow in her voice strangely mixed with indignation. "Please don't read any more."

"I never would have guessed it, you know? Larry Butler a Commie."

"Yeah, I guess you can't trust anybody any more. They're all either after your job or they're damn Reds."

"Right in your back yard, too. Where you least expect it. Christ.

"Maybe we're not being fair about this. Just because he wouldn't answer those questions doesn't mean he's a Communist."

"Aw hell, be realistic, will ya'. If you were called before a committee of the U.S. Congress investigating Red infiltration and you were an honest citizen who had nothing to hide, would you take the 5th Amendment when they asked you if you were a Commie?"

"Well no, but. . ."

"And would you let guys go scot-free if you knew they were Reds or would you turn them in?"

"Well I suppose I'd give their names at least."

"You're damn right you would. So doesn't it prove something that Butler clammed up?"

"If you look at it that way, I guess. . ."

"What do you mean **guess**! There's no two ways about it, man, the guy's a damn Communist."

"Yeah."

"Must be."

"I hate to think so, but there isn't anything else to think."

Solemnly, Bill raised his glass. "I propose a toast. To Lawrence T. Butler. May he rest in peace."

They drank without comment, ate quietly, and when they left the restaurant the laughter was conspicuously absent.

CULTURE (CAMP)

On a damp-tweed evening,
Ass outraged by folding chair,
I sit and shuffle printed programs.
Soon recorder music, meanwhile
A lecture brief, urbane we hope,
Above all brief, on these noble
Unassertive wooden whistles,
While without whistle
Most assertive winds.
(I think they're out of key—
though in a Minor, D or E.)
Then the archaic shrilling starts,
And it's, ah . . . very pretty,
I like this Bach, I really do,
But it's gotten bitter colder,
And my Citroën has no anti-freeze.
Or does it need it? I forget . . .
Ah, the end of the motet!
I like De Pres, he's so relaxing—
I must come again some time,
For to tell the truth,
I need the culture.

— B. Jeffrey Price

"Toute forme créée, même par l'homme, est immortelle . . ."

—Baudelaire

ELECTRIC MUSE

I.

How to eat soup in a Gothic nave,
Or pin down tenement aesthetics?
Can art exist with area woman
Stabbed in lovers' quarrel,
Or with misbegotten smog
That heckles civic lungs?
Pines grace landscapes, seascapes—
Airwick blooms near firescapes.

II.

Apotheosis of popsicle. . . .
Pop, I sing of thee, æsthetic of gluck
And finest refuge of can't afford.
Oversoul, (if undersee) I sing of thee.
Hang shabby in the gallery now,
A subject never come before
But to dodge the cold.
Corrugated cartons are as full a revelation
As ever quattrocento shoat to Brueghel was.
No need despair —
Inspiration's
Everywhere.

III.

Let us not, then, bust out, nor burn pawn shops
Nor copspit with bitter heart,
But calmly gaze 'neath ashy brows
With shot-red neon eyes
To record at once and then
The message give (with comic looks);
To dig the deeper layer or seem to, palming
Proper slippery answers of existential what'sit.

IV.

Ah well . . .
Found art is still the exercise of choice,
And Platonic appearances cannot deceive.
Order and symmetry are all well enough—
A matter of pentameters sprinkled lightly.
(No need to rhyme nor scan very tightly.)
Why positive content or lyrical psalm-bent,
When their groundwork disappears nightly?

V.

It's not a very lasting gift: no soup can ever was.
It may not stand a thousand years: no factory ever tried.
It might not, cannot, will not, should not,
But what's all that to us?
People who live in glass houses, or poison fish in the sea,
Cannot add stature to their cubists by being anxious over
them.

— B. Jeffrey Price

AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE

Pewter-pitted moon, Confucius's balloon,
You're skeinned in a mesh of her hair.
"Hair of fool's gold, hair of fool's gold,"
Says the old, cold moon,
Perched on a point of the peaks of her front.
Well-fingered tomb, my ancestors' moon,
She looks but she sees her face . . .
On a slate obituary for the whole human race
She looks, and she sees her face!
Comfortable moon, like a greasy kitchen beam —
You've been smoked in the ceiling by the patronizing fire
Of the breakfasts of the tenure of the human race.
Through the hair of the skin that briefly wraps her skull,
And the soots of the flares that we set to cheer the night,
May my eyes penetrate to the sky:
The sky and your ark, a Philosophers' ark
That floats in a dark that never was "I".
Some month's end (when I'm soaked
In De Bergerac's dew,)
Draw me to your fires of rafted ice,
And chill me as I forget that I knew such a sphere,
Where to live was to change for the worse.

— B. Jeffrey Prie

SWEET YOUTH

— Warren W. Tignor

Brown leaves skipped along the pavement. A newspaper page sailed and folded in the air. Slender beams of sunlight filtered through the greying sky. The late summer sun warmed the buildings before the fall wind could lace its icy fingers over them.

"You kids had better wear a sweater out to play. It looks a little chilly. I don't want you to start the winter with a cold. Do you hear me?"

"Yeh, mom. We hear you. See you afterwhile."

"Bye."

Those boys are growing so fast. It's hard to believe that they are the same two infants that I used to nurse. The way they strut along the sidewalk makes them look so independent. Guess I'm just getting old like Sara downstairs.

The traffic, coming and going, passed by the house. Car after car, windows down and windows up. People walked along the sidewalk, some briskly and some languidly. A bus came in sight, stopping along the way. Sometimes the vehicle would only pause at a stop and then continue on its way. Cora stood at the apartment window and looked down at her two sons as they scampered out of sight. The bus stopped in front of the house; its door flung open.

My golly. It's Sara! Where in the world did she go? I haven't seen her use the bus in an age. Maybe she went to the market, since she is carrying a bunch of flowers.

Sara's tiny, shiny fingers held the hand-smoothed bus rail at the front exit. The stiff swollen foot that puffed from her shoe felt for the step below. She released the rail and stepped down, all in one motion; her age-shrunk arms were too short to stretch from the step to the rail. Her heavy body pressed her foot down on the worn metal step that reflected the sun, and then the other foot came to rest next to it. She held to the opened bus door to brace herself for the next step. She reached with her foot for the pavement below. Brown leaves undermined her step; whirlwinds of dust stirred the air around her. The blue flowers in her hand bowed to the wind; the violet flowers were chilled by the wind. She had one foot down. Her dress was taut. She completed the step and paused. The door shut. The engine strained and bellowed burnt diesel fuel. The wheels rolled away from the stop.

She made her way up the front steps and entered the house. The tenants upstairs were quiet; their door was shut, and the blare of the television could not be heard. She unlocked the door to the first floor of the house. The air in the room was heavy with particles of dust stirred by the opening door. A ray of sunlight that entered the front window sifted through the specks of silver and gold. She leaned against the armchair next to the door and started to take off her coat.

"Oh my golly! Ooo . . . my golly. I brought his flowers home, his flowers, his violets."

She set them in the chair and took off her coat, and then hung it in the closet near the door. She softly shut the unlocked door to the apartment, as if a visitor was always welcome. She picked up the flowers that were held together by a rumpled tissue. She set them in a vase on an end table near the front window. There the sun in little flashes of light from between the clouds shown upon the blossoms. She tottered to the window and tried to open it.

"Lordy, Lordy, I guess it's stuck again; it just won't open for me. I don't know what to do, and I've brought his flowers home. I don't know what to do."

Sarah struggled with the window stuck in its tracks by the swollen frames that were saturated with water from the rainstorm two days ago. People walked by the window on their way to the store, to visit friends, to work, but not one was aware of the tiny figure in the window that struggled to let a breath of air into her aged house. The sunlight flowed across her face. She became too tired to continue. She watched the faces that passed on the street and sidewalk. She did not recognize anyone; no one recognized her. She sat in her rocking chair and stared at the window. Some small boys were playing catch while they walked along the sidewalk. The ball flew by, then back, again and again.

"Toby, Too-by, come on. We're going to visit grandmom."

"Aw Mommie, I'm playing, Rooom, roooooom, rooom."

"Daddy says that when the car is stuck, you have to rock it."

He was busily building roads in the sand pile. One of the trucks had just broken down and they couldn't get a tow truck to help. It was stuck in the sand, nearly buried by the miniature pieces of gravel. He and his friends tried to pull the truck free with other trucks. They could not free it.

Toby's mother sat in the family car and waited. Toby saw her and that he was going to be able to sit up front. He pulled himself away from his playmates and started to join his mother. In a second, he turned in his tracks and ran back to the sand pile. The small red truck stuck its bumper out of the sand. He pulled it free and ran to the car.

"Let's go Mommie. I'm driving."

He sat in the front seat with the little truck in his lap and guided it with his hands in harmony with the motion of the car as it left the curb.

and made its way to his grandmom's. While they were enroute, Toby rested from his driving.

"Mommie, I want a new tow truck. Can I have a tow truck?"

"No darling, and I mean it."

They turned onto the street that earlier in the day the bus had traveled on, the bus that carried Toby's grandmother with the violets.

I remember playing dolls with Cathy over there. Wonder what ever happened to her. Momma always said that side of the street wasn't nice. It is always shady there, and cluttered with newspapers and advertisements.

"Toby, sit still; we are almost there. If the sun is too warm on you, open the window a little bit."

The old tree stump . . . Judy and I used to play house under that tree. Guess we can park here and walk to the house.

She parked the car along side the tree stump. As soon as the engine stopped, Toby opened the car door and hurried to greet his grandmother. He saw her sitting in the rocker through the window. He picked up the newspaper on the front step and entered. In a trotting motion he headed straight for her chair. He was well ahead of his mother. When he reached the rocker, he pulled it back as far as he could and let it go. His grandmother was rattled by the surprise, but not angry.

"Toby, what is wrong with you? You know better than that!" his mother snapped.

The grandmother only smiled at the mischievous little boy. Toby hurried from the side of the chair and stood in front of his grandmother. His grandmother stretched out her arms to him. She smiled; her eyes had a sparkle of sunlight in them.

She felt his firm little legs that she remembered as being once soft as down. She remembered the tiny little hands that once could hardly grasp her finger, but now were large enough to almost surround her wrists.

"What would you like grandmom to get you for your birthday?"

"I want a tow truck. I want a tow truck. Will you get me a tow truck?"

"I told him that he could not have another truck; he has enough. He could use some new galoshes or a sweater. He is growing right out of his clothes. He doesn't need any new toys."

"Well, we can get those things too. The truck won't be that much."

"I wanna new . . ."

"He can't have any new toys! Do you underst . . ."

"Mommie, look at the pretty flowers!"

"Yes, they are pretty. Do you understand. I don't want him spoiled by getting everything he wants. I told him no trucks and that is it!"

"But, if I give it to him it would be alright. I mean it would not be like you broke your word."

"Toby, leave the flowers alone. We have to go, Mother."

"Please don't go. I'd like to tell you about this morning."

"I'm sorry, but we have to go. Toby, get your coat."

"Please stay for a cup of tea. I didn't mean to make you angry. You know how much I love you and Toby."

She put on her coat and rooted in her purse for her keys. Toby went to his grandmother to give her goodbye. He hugged her and he kissed her. His mother kissed her coldly. His mother took him by the hand and they left. They walked up the street to the car. Sara stood at the window and watched them leave. She waved as they drove by; Toby waved back. She sat down in the rocker and closed her eyes for a moment to rest, then, she got up and made her way to the kitchen.

A porcelain kettle was on the stove. She filled it with enough water for no more than two cups, so that when the steam boiled off there was sure to be enough to completely fill her cup. Plenty of water was necessary for her to keep the tea weak. Placing the kettle on the burner, she reached to the cabinet drawer nearby to get a match to light the burner. A constantly burning pilot was wasteful; she turned it off. She left the water to boil, and sat at the table where the teabag from her breakfast was on a napkin she had saved from a friend's son's wedding. A rusty colored dry pool surrounded the pinched teabag.

There was a light knock on the door. Cora from upstairs had come to say "hello" but was careful not to wake Sara if she was sleeping. She peeked in the door at the rocker and seeing that Sara was not napping, she called a little louder, "Anybody home? Sara, where are you?"

Sarah went to the living room to see who called. There she met her neighbor and tenant, Cora. She invited Cora to join her for some tea in the kitchen. They both sat at the table and waited for the water to come to a boil.

"How do you feel today? It's been such a beautiful day."

"I feel better thank you; took some baking soda last night to relieve the gas."

"I went to the cemetery to see Phil's grave this morning. I used to go regularly, but not any more. They don't care for it like they used to do. They ought to trim the grass; it's so long. I took some flowers to put on his grave but I forgot and brought them home with me. I don't know what to do."

The metallic patter of the water beginning to boil filled the air. The boiling water rolled upon itself before the sound caught their attention.

"I think I hear the water boiling, Sara."

Sara got up and turned off the fire; she left the pot on the hot iron burner to calm. Cora watched her get the cups. Her hands shook so that the cups rattled in their saucers.

"Why that is a pretty dress you have on."

Sarah ran her stiffened hand down the folds in the dress over her nearly fleshless leg.

"It was my daughter's when she was in high school. She was going to throw it out, but I saved it. It's all right, but the color's faded."

Cora heard a telephone ring but was not immediately sure if it was hers. On the second ring, she knew it was her own and told Sara, "My phone's ringing. I'll be right back."

Hurriedly she made her way from the kitchen to the front room, to the stairs. The phone was still ringing as she stepped from the stairs and turned through the apartment door. Sara decided not to wait for her to return.

"Guess I'll drink my tea. She won't want hers. She always leaves before she finishes drinking it."

The hot water was still on the stove. Sara took her cup and saucer to the countertop to the right of the stove and then got the water. The heated handle was cool to her senseless hand. She poured the water into her cup and set the kettle back on the stove. Carrying the water to the table, some of it spilled over into the saucer. When she sat down, she poured the water from the saucer back into the cup. There didn't seem to be a drop of tea in the used bag on the napkin, but she put it in the water. Motionlessly waiting for the red current of the tea to pervade every inch of the cup, Sara closed her eyes and breathed in the brewing vapor. The chill air of the evening crept about the windows and rustled the leaves on the street. She pulled the steaming teabag from the water and gently squeezed its juice into the cup. She put the bag on the napkin to dry.

My own daughter don't even want to talk to me. She won't tell me anything. But I know that Toby got a new coat and that he's doing good in school. She won't tell me anything. I have to ask this one and that one.

Cora descended the stairs and entered the kitchen. "That was the grocery; they wanted my list. Did you want anything?"

"No, thank you."

"Well, I'll call back if you do."

"No, I don't want anything."

Cora didn't offer again. Sara asked if she would like her tea and then walked to the cupboard near the stove to get a teabag. The water was still warm enough to serve. She filled the cup and placed the teabag in the water. To steady the cup as she passed it, Sara held its rim, her thumb overlapping it. There was a slight hesitant motion as she placed the cup in front of Cora as if a moment of weakness overswept her body. Cora pulled the tea towards herself.

Stirring her tea Cora said, "Pass the sugar please."

"No, I don't take it."

"Pass the sugar please."

Sara was not listening. She answered, "Yes, it's right here."

Her gaze rested far away. Her hands were youthfully calm.

Cora rose from her chair to reach the sugar and then tried to begin a conversation. "Did you read the paper this morning?"

Sara answered that she had.

"The fall fashions are in there."

The conversation stopped. The evening shadows brought a silence over the two women, and began to lull them.

"Oh, it's getting late," she uttered. "I have to run and get some dinner ready. Thank you for the tea. I'll see you later. Bye, bye."

"Bye," replied Sara.

Cora walked out of the kitchen and through the house to the stairs. She left Sara alone. As she walked the steps, she muttered. .

"Lord, please don't let me get old like that."

Sara finished the tea and set the cup in the sink. She rinsed the cup with cold water and set it on the rack to dry. She walked with her elbows tucked to her sides and her hands outstretched from her body like she was sleep walking, or perhaps going to greet an old friend; but they were only to help her keep steady as she moved to the rocking chair near the window. Sara looked at the rocker and seemed to speak to it. "I feel so giddy, just giddy all over. I'm going to phone her. I've never felt like this before."

She turned from the rocking chair and walked to the phone on the table, just behind the front door. She lifted the receiver to her ear and stuck her shaky finger into the circle. Repeating the number as she dialed, she completed it and waited for the ring.

"I need you; answer me, please," she whispered. "It's almost dark, you should be home."

The phone rang three, four times and then a voice said, "Ray's Electric Shop, can I help you."

Sara replied weakly, "No."

She placed the receiver into the cradle and walked back to the rocker. The twilight filtered through the white mesh curtains that dropped along side her chair. The force of her body on the chair gave her a jolt when she sat down. To try to pass the time, she pulled the newspaper from underneath herself, unfolded it, held it toward the window light to read. The place she opened it to displayed modern beds, corduroy pillows, and air foam mattresses. She began to read to herself.

"Lifetime guarantee. Buy May Fair . . . Rest Well. . . ."

She turned the page of the paper. There were illustrations of toys: dolls, guns, trucks, tow trucks, playhouses.

"I feel so giddy. I feel good almost. I don't know what it is. My that is a beautiful little doll. She cries . . . she winks. Her dress is precious. I'd like to have a doll like that. I feel so giddy."

The patter of the rain beat upon the window. The first drops slid down the glass panes and vanished into the unpainted sill. More drops fell upon the window. The view outside was blurred by the crystal clear water. The night came through the window as if it were open. The darkness swept

over the pages and softly bathed her eyes, and filled the room with silence. The rippling edges of new born waves swept down the window as the rain became more intense the waves washed over the sidewalk and into the street, out of sight into the darkness of the night.

A PEAR TREE/RACHEL

A TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW

Spring has a hand in this: A man wakes,
And bliss: In front of his window a pear tree in bloom:
And all at once, that burden on the heart predicting doom
Is gone.

You see, Man cannot on his mourning insist
For his one dead flower that fell
In the cruel autumn's blow,
If spring, consoling him, smilingly hands him
A giant bouquet right in front of his window.

— J. Levy

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Calvert Review once again
announces a

WRITING CONTEST

Hundred dollar prizes will be awarded for the best fiction and the best poetry of the year. Manuscript guides are available in the Calvert Review office, Room A-4, in the basement of Woods Hall, or in the English Department office. The contest is open to undergraduate students; staff members are not eligible.

calvert review





